

ITEM:

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SUBJECT:

Amendment to the Basin Plan for the Control of Methylmercury in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary– *Workshop to Receive Comments*

BOARD ACTION:

The purpose of this informational workshop is to initiate discussions on proposed Basin Plan amendment alternatives for the control of methylmercury in the Delta. Staff will finalize the alternatives and provide recommendations at a future Regional Board hearing.

BACKGROUND:

Staff has developed a total maximum daily load (TMDL) technical report for methylmercury in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary. The report discusses methylmercury sources including municipal and industrial wastewater, urban runoff, wetlands, open channels, agricultural return flows, and methylmercury from the major tributaries. The TMDL report also describes beneficial uses, fish tissue numeric targets, a linkage between aqueous methylmercury and fish tissue methylmercury, and methylmercury load reductions required to meet the targets.

The TMDL report forms the basis of a program to control methylmercury in the Delta. Staff is proposing to amend the Basin Plan to include a methylmercury control program for the Delta. Staff is developing a Basin Plan amendment report that will discuss alternatives for new water quality objectives and evaluate several alternatives to reduce methylmercury and total mercury loading into the Delta. The proposed amendments will also include adding the commercial and sport fishing beneficial use to the Delta and a monitoring program to assess water quality objective compliance.

The proposed methylmercury control program will consist of three parts: control methylmercury sources, control total mercury sources, and reduce methylmercury exposure to the fish eating public. Alternatives discussed in the staff report will include requiring methylmercury reductions from the sources mentioned above. For most methylmercury discharges, additional studies are needed to characterize individual sources of methylmercury and to evaluate if control options are feasible. Control of total mercury will be evaluated as a means of reducing methylmercury production. Risk reduction will focus on updating fish consumption advisories and public outreach and education programs.

The TMDL report is available on the Board's internet site at <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/programs/tmdl/deltahg.htm>.

ISSUES:

At the workshop, staff will describe alternatives for:

- Water quality objectives to protect beneficial uses,
- Methylmercury source allocations, and
- Implementation plans to reduce methyl and total mercury discharges in the Delta and its tributaries.

Mgmt. Review _____

Legal Review _____

28/29 November 2005 Region 5 Board Meeting
Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
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Rancho Cordova, CA 95670